

JOHNNY'S GIFT

By Harold Carter.

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"Two bats, six Teddy bears, three balloons and six boxes of lead soldiers," the head nurse counted. "And a football. Who wants the football?"

"Johnny Ward," answered Nurse Blair, half crying and half



"What Are You Going to Do With That Football?"

laughing. "Isn't it pitiful, Miss Gough?"

Nurse Gough set down her pencil and the memorandum and looked at the other wonderingly. "A football!" she reiterated. "Then he doesn't realize?"

"No, poor little fellow. Would you give it to him, Miss Gough?"

"What would the mother think?" the head nurse asked, and then Nurse Blair ceased all pretense and dabbed her handkerchief against her eyes openly.

"Let's ask Dr. Keith," she answered, and that solved the difficulty for the time being.

Johnny Ward was eight years old and had been in the hospital for nearly five weeks, ever since he was knocked down by the baker's wagon while playing upon the street almost in front of the hospital entrance. He was quite helpless below the waist, and would always be so, said Dr. Keith, after the operation, unless—well, miracles had happened and such cases had got well before. So he said nothing to the pretty young mother who came day after day, wistful and patient and always hopeful. Of late she had begun to suspect that her only boy, her stay that was to be in her later widowhood, would never leave the building save in a wheeled chair. But she kept her fears to herself, and nobody had had the heart to tell her.

And Johnny wanted a football for his Christmas present!

"Well," said Dr. Keith gruffly, "why shouldn't he have one if he wants it? Isn't there enough money to buy a football? Why, I'll buy him one myself. What sort should he have? What are they made of? It's a long time since I was a boy myself," he added, in self-excuse.

"Why, they're made of pigskin, aren't they, doctor?" answered the nurse. "But you don't under-